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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000900

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STATE FOR AF/W-EPLUMB AND INR/AA-BGRAVES, LONDON AND PARIS
FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: VIEWS ON ELECTIONS

REF: A. ABIDJAN 864

[1](#)B. ABIDJAN 863

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CYNTHIA AKUETTEH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) A
ND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Deputy Director of the Presidential Cabinet Sarata Ottro Toure told Poloff August 23 that President Laurent Gbagbo is committed to holding elections and that it is possible to hold elections by December 2007 or January [1](#)2008. Toure said that, since the 2000 elections were the most transparent elections ever held in Cote d'Ivoire, there should be no objection to utilizing the 2000 voter register as a basis for the creation of a new voter register. Secretary General of the opposition party Rassemblement des

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Republicains (RDR) Henriette Dagin-Diabate told Poloffs August 22 that the RDR agrees that elections must take place quickly, but that it is critical that the elections are free and fair in order to have lasting peace in the country. German Political Counselor Sonja Jelineck told Poloff August 23 that there is speculation that President Gbagbo will allow a few "audiences foraines" (tribunals that will issue replacement birth certificates to those whose births were not registered) to be held, declare that after the July 30 "Flame of Peace" ceremony the civil war is over, and call for elections around the end of 2007. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Sarata Ottro Toure, Deputy Director of the President's Cabinet, told Poloff August 23 that President Laurent Gbagbo is committed to the holding of elections. Toure said the President came to power through elections and has fought for democracy in Cote d'Ivoire throughout his political career. According to Toure, unlike other African countries, Cote d'Ivoire has a "culture of democracy" and is used to holding elections. Toure stated that the 2000 elections that brought Gbagbo to the Presidency were the most correct elections ever held in Cote d'Ivoire. Toure noted that, for that reason, there should be no objection to using the 2000 voter register as a basis for the creation of the new voter register. Toure said President Gbagbo was ready to hold elections in 2005 and argued for limiting the presidency to only two terms in office. According to Toure, the Constitution states that if elections cannot be held due to a rebellion, the incumbent President stays in office. Toure underscored the importance of the Constitution as a force to unite the country's 60 ethnic groups.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Toure stated that Cote d'Ivoire's "friends" need to help it organize free and transparent elections. She noted that President Gbagbo has stated that all political parties that are signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement can present candidates in the election. Toure told Poloff

that it is possible to hold elections by December 2007 or January 2008 from a technical point of view because the country already has in place the institutions necessary to organize the election. She stated that the National Institute of Statistics is a body composed of technocrats that has always organized the country's elections and "has nothing to do" with President Gbagbo. She added that the UN has requested its assistance in at least 2 African elections. Comment: Acting Chief of the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire Electoral Division Issaka Souma told Congressional staffers Shannon Smith and Mark Clack August 14 (Reftel B) that President Gbagbo's August 6 call for elections by December 2007 (Reftel A) was a political declaration to show the President's commitment to elections, but that it is reasonable to say that elections are not possible by December 2007. End Comment.

14. (SBU) Henriette Dagre-Diabate, Secretary General of the opposition political party RDR, told Poloffs August 22 that the RDR is very hopeful about peace in Cote d'Ivoire. She said she believes the country will be able to emerge from the crisis and commence reconstruction. Dagre-Diabate said the RDR agrees that elections must take place quickly, but believes that it's critical that the elections are "good" ones in order to have a lasting peace. She said Ivorians want their identification documents quickly as well. Dagre-Diabate stated that in order to have free and fair elections, all who have the right to vote must be allowed to do so, the country's electoral institutions need to do their job, and the National Institute of Statistics must be allowed to perform its function without any political influence. Dagre-Diabate believes that international observers are needed, but warned that they should not arrive "on the last day" of the election. Dagre-Diabate noted that the RDR is currently checking for accuracy the version of the 2000 voter register that was recently distributed by the Independent

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Electoral Commission to all political parties that signed the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement. Dagre-Diabate would not speculate on what would happen if the opposition political parties rejected the 2000 electoral list as invalid. Dagre-Diabate said the RDR is informing its members about the "audiences foraines" that will issue replacement birth certificates. She warned that bad administrative organization could derail the "audiences foraines" and called on "democratic nations" to assist in ensuring security for the audiences foraines.

15. (C) German Political Counselor Sonja Jelineck told Poloff August 23 that there is speculation that President Gbagbo will allow a few "audiences foraines" to be held, declare that after the July 30 "Flame of Peace" ceremony the civil war is over and peace has returned, and call for elections around the end of 2007. According to this scenario, Gbagbo would argue that, since some "audiences foraines" have been held and all political parties are allowed to field candidates, there is no reason for the international community to charge that the elections are not free and fair, even if the opposition decides to boycott them.

16. (C) Comment. Toure's comment that the 2000 elections were free and fair was surprising and would not be supported by the opposition political parties. Even in the unlikely event Prime Minister Soro were to convince the Forces Nouvelles to accept an "abbreviated" identification process and elections around the end of 2007, the unarmed opposition parties, who already feel sidelined by the Ouagadougou Political Accord, are unlikely to do so. The result would be a continuation of the current political crisis with a President lacking a clear mandate and no permanent resolution of the identification issue, which was one of the underlying factors that led to the civil war.

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